Hillsborough Township Public Schools

Central Administration Performance Pay Evaluations

Hillsborough uses an evaluation system for its Central Administration based substantially on the elements of each respective position in the job description. Each element is rated based on a scale of “Successful” or “Needs Improvement” with a “Not Applicable” option. In addition to the ratings on the job description elements, the Hillsborough evaluation system also contains areas for qualitative written statements on “Commendations” and “Recommendations” with a final section detailing work attendance and reasons/frequency of missed work.

In many ways, the Hillsborough system is industry standard for Central Administration evaluation. That is, if one walked into nearly every public school system in the United States, you would expect to find an evaluation system very similar to this approach. However, if Hillsborough is to move toward a performance-based system for compensation, significant changes are necessary for the district’s evaluation system.

Evaluations are inherently subjective measures and rely on the honest and trained professional judgment of a supervisor to make a fair assessment of performance. However, this does not mean that they are without meaning and value and that they are not critical measurement tools in determining effectiveness. With some reasonable work on the evaluation system in Hillsborough, the district can adopt an evaluation system that both challenges the Central Administration to truly achieve excellence, and provides meaningful and honest feedback to help them on this journey.

Suggested changes to the evaluation system are detailed below.

1. **Consider the fundamental and key functions of the position and evaluate on them.** Currently the evaluation system lists off a number of duties and responsibilities for each Administrator and evaluates on them individually. Consider changing to an approach where the core functions of the position are evaluated instead of the individual parts. Taking the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources as an example, consider evaluating on these sample core components:
   * Recruiting
   * Policy Management
   * Negotiation & Labor Relations
   * Employee Discipline
   * Organizational Development
   * Training
   * Benefit Management
2. **Consider evaluating core functions of leadership in addition to core position functions.**

There are a number of key responsibilities district leaders must perform if the organization is to truly be effective. Examples of these are:

* Dependability/Reliability
* Customer Service
* Organizational Representation
* Ongoing Professional Learning
  + Teamwork

1. **Develop a rubric for each measured element that allows for several different possible levels of performance.** There are many shades of gray in performance above, between, and below “Successful” and “Needs Improvement.” Consider developing a rubric for each evaluation element that reflects these different levels. The culture in the district will need to evolve to where everyone understands that truly elite performance is difficult to achieve and maintain, though certainly not impossible. For example:
   * Exceptional – truly elite and rare performance.
   * High Performing – consistently exceeding expectations, going above and beyond.
   * Professional – meeting performance expectations. Satisfactory, fully competent.
   * Needs Improvement – concerns are evident and correction necessary.
   * Unacceptable – serious issues. Termination possible or even probably.
2. **Develop annual reliability trainings on the evaluation tool for both the evaluators and the evaluatees.** This is an opportunity for everyone to review the expectations of the organization and to generate consideration for how improvement can occur. Discussions about what “professional” versus “needs improvement” performance look like improve the reliability (consistency) of the instrument.
3. **Create a process where the evaluation instrument is continually reviewed and improved.** Whatever system the district adopts is likely to be flawed. These flaws are mitigated over time and the organization’s capacity about what great performance really looks like grows if there are ongoing conversations and processes about how the evaluation system can learn and change for the better.
4. **Provide a self-reflective component.** Improve the capacity of Administrators to improve by formalizing their self-reflection through the evaluation system. This self-reflection should not be considered part of the scoring, but may help inform the supervisor.
5. **Provide some level of oversight and accountability.** An independent third party or group should review the evaluation process and scores to prevent abuses or rampant inflation. In Hillsborough’s case, the Board of Education may serve this purpose. They should not be scoring or making employee performance determinations for the Central Administration, but rather providing accountability for the Superintendent in making sure he/she is following the evaluation process with integrity. For the Superintendent evaluation, the board members should serve this purpose for each other.
6. **Include a systemic process for professional growth.** A quality and honest evaluation system will reveal areas for improvement for employees. The evaluation system should also allow the evaluator to develop plans for improvement with the evaluatee that directly address weakness areas identified through the process. If no weaknesses are identified, then the evaluation system is not critical enough – everyone has something on which they can improve.
7. **Use multiple and outside sources of data to inform the evaluation.** Key performance indicators should be reviewed by the evaluator and taken into account for the evaluation. Items like student achievement results, teacher attrition rates, accounting process management, and other quantitative elements may be used along with other qualitative elements like newspaper articles, public presentations, notes, Board relations, etc.
8. **Allow for due process in the evaluation.** The employee should be allowed to present their own information in the official file should they disagree with the scoring and rationale of the evaluator. However, the evaluator’s professional judgment must be the final determiner.

For use in a performance-based pay system, the evaluation will need to generate some kind of numeric score that is a general measure of the employee’s performance. The system should be designed where professional (competent) evaluation scores earn basic and reasonable wages. Higher levels of performance should provide increasingly significant rewards for increasingly exceptional performance and lesser levels of performance just the opposite.